

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8411

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY, RO, YO

SUBJECT: ASAD VISITS TO YUGOSLAVIA AND ROMANIA

REF: BELGRADE 4258

1. SUMMARY: ASAD VISITS TO BELGRADE AND BUCHAREST
AFFORDED SYRIAN LEADER OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN AND DEFEND
SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. PRES. ASAD FOLLOWED UP HIS PARIS VISIT EARLIER IN
MONTH WITH TALKS IN BELGRADE AND BUCHAREST WHICH PRIMARILY
SEEM TO HAVE FOCUSED ON DETAILED DEFENSE OF SYRIAN INTER-
VENTION IN LEBANON. ASAD IN HIS BANQUET SPEECH JUNE 25
PAID TRIBUTE TO TITO'S FOUNDING ROLE IN NON-ALIGNED MOVE-
MENT AND YUGOSLAVIA'S SUPPORT FOR ARAB POSITION IN DISPUTE
WITH ISRAEL. ASAD THEN CLAIMED THAT FORCES OPPOSING JUST
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PEACE IN REGION HAD EXPLOITED LEBANESE CIVIL WAR TO DRAW

ATTENTION AWAY FROM NEED TO FOSTER PROGRESS ON PALESTINIAN ISSUE, WHICH SYRIA HAS ALWAYS STRONGLY SUPPORTED. ASAD ASSERTED THAT CONSPIRACY DIRECTED AGAINST LEBANON LED TO FIGHTING AMONG SOME PALESTINIAN GROUPS AT TIME WHEN SYRIA EXERTING EFFORTS TO ENHANCE PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY. ASAD CONCLUDED WITH REITERATION OF SYRIAN GOALS IN LEBANON: PRESERVATION OF SECURITY, UNITY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON.

3. SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTED ASAD PRESS CONFERENCE IN BELGRADE IN WHICH PRESIDENT STATED THAT "WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN FORCES FROM LEBANON DEPENDENT UPON DESIRE OF LEGAL LEBANESE INSTITUTIONS. ANY TIME LEBANESE PRESIDENT REQUESTS THEIR WITHDRAWAL, THEY WILL WITHDRAW. WE CAME TO LEBANON AT REQUEST OF LEBANESE OFFICIALS."

4. INFO MINISTER AHMAD AND FONMIN KHADDAM MET WITH SYRIAN STUDENTS IN BELGRADE FOR FOUR HOURS AND EXPLAINED RAMIFICATIONS OF LEBANESE CRISIS, ACCORDING TO SYRIAN MEDIA.

5. ASAD VISIT TO BUCHAREST JUNE 26-28 PROVIDED OCCASION FOR SYRIAN LEADER TO MAKE SIMILAR POINTS TO ROMANIAN AUDIENCE. IN ADDITION, AT PRESS CONFERENCE ASAD CHARGED SOME PALESTINIAN GROUPS IN LEBANON WITH DEVIATING FROM PLO CHARTER BY INTERFERING IN LEBANESE DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. IN JOINT COMMUNIQUE BOTH SIDES REAFFIRMED THEIR SUPPORT FOR RESUMPTION OF GENEVA CONFERENCE WITH PARTICIPATION OF ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING PLO, ON EQUAL FOOTING. COMMUNIQUE REVEALED THAT FIVE AGREEMENTS HAD BEEN SIGNED BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES: (1) TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION, (2) COOPERATION IN POSTAL SERVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS, (3) MEDICAL AND VETERINARY SERVICES AGREEMENT, (4) PUBLIC HEALTH COOPERATION, AND (5) CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM FOR 1976-77.

6. SYRIAN MEDIA COMMENTED THAT SYRIA BENEFITED FROM OPPORTUNITY FOR PRELIMINARY CONSULTATIONS ON NON-ALIGNED COLOMBO SUMMIT, DISCUSSIONS OF LEBANESE CIVIL WAR AND MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT, AND IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA AND ROMANIA.

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7. COMMENT: ASAD APPARENTLY DEVOTED MUCH OF HIS TIME IN BOTH CAPITALS, ESPECIALLY BELGRADE, TO EXPLAINING SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANESE CRISIS IN ATTEMPT TO BLUNT THIRD WORLD CRITICISM OF SARG ACTIONS. LONG SESSION SPENT WITH SYRIAN STUDENTS IN BELGRADE FOR TALKS ABOUT LEBANON INDICATES THAT STUDENTS NOT ENTIRELY SYMPATHETIC WITH DAMASCUS INTERVENTION AND DESIROUS OF HEARING FIRST-HAND JUSTIFICATION OF THEIR

GOVERNMENT'S DECISION. LENGTHY VISIT TO BUCHAREST PROBABLY
REFLECTED NEED TO GIVE CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO DEVELOPMENT
OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WHICH ANNOUNCED IN COMMUNIQUE. ON

THE WHOLE ASAD HAS MANAGED TO DEMONSTRATE TO HIS LOCAL
CONSTITUENCY THAT HIS CONCENTRATION ON LEBANESE PROBLEMS
HAS NOT PREVENTED HIM FROM CONTINUING TO PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE
IN THIRD WORLD AFFAIRS. PRESIDENT UNDOUBTEDLY OBTAINED
MORE PRECISE IDEA OF HOW HIS LEBANESE POLICY BEING
RECEIVED IN KEY NON-ARAB CAPITALS. THIS, HIS SECOND
TRIP ABROAD LAST MONTH, INCLUDING EXTENSION OF STAY IN
ROMANIA BY AN ADDITIONAL DAY, ALSO HELPED STRENGTHEN
IMPRESSION AMONG SYRIANS THAT PRESIDENT IN FULL CONTROL
OF INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION.
MURPHY

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